

THE
WORKS

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

L O R D B Y R O N.

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OF
THE RIGHT HONORABLE

JOHN DE LA POE
ESQ.

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
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VOL. VI.

*PRISONER OF CHILLON — MANFRED —
LAMENT OF TASSO etc.*

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

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VOL. VI

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1842

THE
PRISONER OF CHILLON etc.

THE
LESSON OF CHILDREN

SONNET ON CHILLON.

ETERNAL spirit of the chainless mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art,
For there thy habitation is the heart —
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned —
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.

Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,

And thy sad floor an altar — for 'twas trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace

Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard! — May none those marks efface!

For they appeal from tyranny to God.

THE
PRISONER OF CHILLON.

A F A B L E.

I.

My hair is grey, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,²
As men's have grown from sudden fears:
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are bann'd, and barr'd — forbidden fare; 10
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death;

That father perish'd at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place;
We were seven — who now are one,

Six in youth, and one in age,
Finish'd as they had begun,

Prond of Persecution's rage;
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have seal'd;
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied;
Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

20

II.

There are seven pillars of gothic mold,
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and grey,
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray,
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp:
And in each pillar there is a ring,

30

And in each ring there is a chain;
That iron is a cankering thing,
For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away, 40
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years — I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score,
When my last brother droop'd and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III.

They chain'd us each to a column stone,
And we were three — yet, each alone,
We could not move a single pace, 50
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight;
And thus together — yet apart,
Gettered in hand, but pined in heart;
'Twas still some solace in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each,
With some new hope, or legend old, 60

Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon-stone,
A grating sound — not full and free
As they of yore were wont to be:
It might be fancy — but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV.

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest
I ought to do — and did my best —
And each did well in his degree.
'The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him — with eyes as blue as heaven,
For him my soul was sorely moved,
And truly might it be distress
To see such bird in such a nest;
For he was beautiful as day —
(When day was beautiful to me
As to young eagles, being free) —
A polar day, which will not see,
A sunset till its summer's gone,
Its sleepless summer a long light,

70

80

The snow-clad offspring of the sun:
And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for nought but others' ills,
And then they flowed like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe
Which he abhorr'd to view below.

90

V.

The other was as pure of mind,
But formed to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perish'd in the foremost rank

With joy: — but not in chains to pine:
His spirit withered with their clank,

I saw it silently decline —

And so perchance in sooth did mine;
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.

100

He was a hunter of the hills,

Had followed there the deer and wolf;

To him this dungeon was a gulf,
And fettered feet the worst of ills.

VI.

Lake Lemman lies by Chillon's walls:
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent 110
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,⁵

Which round about the wave enthralls:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made — and like a living grave.
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay,
We heard it ripple night and day;

Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high 120
And wanton in the happy sky;

And then the very rock hath rock'd,
And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

VII.

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loath'd and put away his food;
It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,

For we were used to hunter's fare, 130
And for the like had little care:
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captive's tears
Have moisten'd many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den:
But what were these to us or him?
These wasted not his heart or limb;
My brother's soul was of that mold 140
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side;
But why delay the truth? — he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand — nor dead,
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died — and they unlocked his chain,
And scoop'd for him a shallow grave 150
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begg'd them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine — it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,

That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer —
They coldly laugh'd — and laid him there:
The flat and turfless earth above 160
The being we so much did love;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such murder's fitting monument!

VIII.

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherish'd since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be 170
Less wretched now, and one day free;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired —
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was withered on the stalk away.
Oh God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood: —
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,

I've seen it on the breaking ocean 180
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread:
But these were horrors — this was woe
Unmix'd with such — but sure and slow:
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender — kind,
And grieved for those he left behind;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom 190
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray —
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright,
And not a word of murmur — not
A groan o'er his untimely lot, —
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I was sunk in silence — lost 200
In this last loss, of all the most;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less:
I listened, but I could not hear —

I called, for I was wild with fear;
I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonished;
I called, and thought I heard a sound —
I burst my chain with one strong bound, 210
And rush'd to him: — I found him not,
I only stirr'd in this black spot,
I only lived — *I* only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;
The last — the sole — the dearest link
Between me and the eternal brink,
Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath —
My brothers — both had ceased to breathe: 220
I took that hand which lay so still,
Alas! my own was full as chill;
I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive —
A frantic feeling, when we know
That what we love shall ne'er be so.
 I know not why
 I could not die,
I had no earthly hope — but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death. 230

IX.

What next befell me then and there
I know not well — I never knew —
First came the loss of light, and air,
And then of darkness too:
I had no thought, no feeling — none —
Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist;
For all was blank, and bleak, and grey,
It was not night — it was not day, 240
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness — without a place;
There were no stars — no earth — no time —
No check — no change — no good — no crime —
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless! 250

X.

A light broke in upon my brain, —
It was the carol of a bird;

It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track, 260
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before,
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,
And tamer than upon the tree;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seem'd to say them all for me! 270
I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more:
It seem'd like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.

I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine, 280
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in winged guise,
A visitant from Paradise;
For — Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile;
I sometimes deemed that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 'twas mortal — well I knew, 290
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone, —
Lone — as the corse within its shroud,
Lone — as a solitary cloud,
A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI.

A kind of change came in my fate, 300
My keepers grew compassionate,
I know not what had made them so,

They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was: — my broken chain
With links unfasten'd did remain,
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart;
And tread it over every part;
And round the pillars one by one, 310
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crush'd heart fell blind and sick.

XII.

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all, 320
Who loved me in a human shape;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me:
No child — no sire — no kin had I,
No partner in my misery;
I thought of this, and I was glad,

For thought of them had made me mad;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barr'd windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high, 330
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII.

I saw them — and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high — their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channell'd rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-wall'd distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down; 340
And then there was a little isle,⁴
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue. 350

The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seemed joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seemed to fly,
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled — and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode 360
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,
And yet my glance, too much opprest,
Had almost need of such a rest.

XIV.

It might be months, or years, or days,
I kept no count — I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free, 370
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where,
It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be,
I learn'd to love despair.

And thus when they appear'd at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage — and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home: 380
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watch'd them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill — yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell —
My very chains and I grew friends
So much a long communion tends 390
To make us what we are: — even I
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

S O N N E T.

ROUSSEAU — Voltaire — our Gibbon — and de
Staël —

⁵ Leman! these names are worthy of thy shore,
'Thy shore of names like these, wert thou no
more,

Their memory thy remembrance would recall:
'To them thy banks were lovely as to all,
But they have made them lovelier, for the lore
Of mighty minds doth hallow in the core
Of human hearts the ruin of a wall

Where dwelt the wise and wondrous; but by *thee*
How much more, Lake of Beauty! do we feel,
In sweetly gliding o'er thy crystal sea,
The wild glow of that not ungentle zeal,
Which of the heirs of immortality
Is proud, and makes the breath of glory real!

S T A N Z A S T O —.

I.

'THOUGH the day of my destiny's over,
 And the star of my fate hath declined,
 Thy soft heart refused to discover
 The faults which so many could find;
 Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
 It shrunk not to share it with me,
 And the love which my spirit hath painted
 It never hath found but in *thee*.

II.

Then when nature around me is smiling
 The last smile which answers to mine,
 I do not believe it beguiling
 Because it reminds me of thine;
 And when winds are at war with the ocean,
 As the breasts I believed in with me,
 If their billows excite an emotion,
 It is that they bear me from *thee*.

III.

Though the rock of my last hope is shiver'd,

And its fragments are sunk in the wave,

Though I feel that my soul is deliver'd

To pain — it shall not be its slave.

There is many a pang to pursue me:

They may crush, but they shall not contemn —

They may torture but shall not subdue me —

'Tis of *thee* that I think — not of them.

IV.

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,

Though woman, thou didst not forsake,

Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,

Though slander'd, thou never couldst shake, —

Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,

Though parted, it was not to fly,

Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,

Nor, mute, that the world might belie.

V.

Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,

Nor the war of the many with one —

If my soul was not fitted to prize it,

'Twas folly not sooner to shun:

And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of *thee*.

From the wreck of the past, which hath perish'd,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that what I most cherish'd
Deserved to be dearest of all:
In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree;
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of *thee*.

D A R K N E S S.

I HAD a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came, and went — and came, and brought
no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires — and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings — the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gathered round their blazing
homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;

Forests were set on fire — but hour by hour
They fell and faded — and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash — and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flasbes fell upon them: some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and looked up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild
 birds shriek'd,

And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless — they were slain for food:
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again; — a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought — and that was
 death,

Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails — men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devoured,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept,
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress — he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies; they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects — saw, and shriek'd, and
died —
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,

Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless —
A lump of death — a chaos of hard clay.

The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal; as they
dropp'd

They slept on the abyss without a surge —
The waves were dead; the tides were in their
grave,

The moon their mistress had expired before;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them — She was the universe.

CHURCHILL'S GRAVE,

A FACT LITERALLY RENDERED.

I stood beside the grave of him who blazed
The comet of a season, and I saw
The humblest of all sepulchres, and gazed
With not the less of sorrow and of awe
On that neglected turf and quiet stone,
With name no clearer than the names unknown,
Which lay unread around it: and I ask'd
The Gardener of that ground, why it might be
That for this plant strangers his memory task'd
Through the thick deaths of half a century;
And thus he answered — “Well, I do not know
“Why frequent travellers turn to pilgrims so;

“He died before my day of Sextonship,
“And I had not the digging of this grave.”
And is this all? I thought, — and do we rip
The veil of Immortality? and crave
I know not what of honour and of light
Through unborn ages; to endure this blight?
So soon and so successful? As I said,
The Architect of all on which we tread,
For Earth is but a tombstone, did essay
To extricate remembrance from the clay,
Whose minglings might confuse a Newton’s thought
Were it not that all life must end in one,
Of which we are but dreamers; — as he caught
As ’twere the twilight of a former Sun,
Thus spoke he, — “I believe the man of whom
“You wot, who lies in this selected tomb,
“Was a most famous writer in his day,
“And therefore travellers step from out their way
“To pay him honour, — and myself whate’er
“Your honour pleases,” — then most pleased I shook
From out my pocket’s avaricious nook
Some certain coins of silver, which as ’twere
Perforce I gave this man, though I could spare
So much but inconveniently; — Ye smile,
I see ye, ye profane ones! all the while,

Because my homely phrase the truth would tell.
You are the fools, not I — for I did dwell
With a deep thought, and with a soften'd eye,
On that Old Sexton's natural homily,
In which there was Obscurity and Fame,
The Glory and the Nothing of a Name.

THE DREAM.

I.

OUR life is twofold; Sleep hath its own world,
 A boundary between the things misnamed
 Death and existence: Sleep hath its own world,
 And a wide realm of wild reality,
 And dreams in their developement have breath,
 And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy;
 They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
 They take a weight from off our waking toils,
 They do divide our being; they become
 A portion of ourselves as of our time, 10
 And look like heralds of eternity;
 They pass like spirits of the past, — they speak
 Like sybils of the future; they have power —
 The tyranny of pleasure and of pain;
 They make us what we were not — what they will,
 And shake us with the vision that's gone by,
 The dread of vanish'd shadows — Are they so?
 Is not the past all shadow? What are they?
 Creations of the mind? — The mind can make
 Substance, and people planets of its own 20

With beings brighter than have been, and give
A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.
I would recall a vision which I dream'd
Perchance in sleep — for in itself a thought,
A slumbering thought, is capable of years,
And curdles a long life into one hour.

II.

I saw two beings in the hues of youth
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green and of mild declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such, 30
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
Scattered at intervals, and wreathing smoke
Arising from such rustic roofs; — the hill
Was crown'd with a peculiar diadem
Of trees, in circular array, so fix'd,
Not by the sport of nature, but of man:
These two, a maiden and a youth, were there
Gazing — the one on all that was beneath 40
Fair as herself — but the boy gazed on her;
And both were young, and one was beautiful:
And both were young — yet not alike in youth.
As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge

The maid was on the eve of womanhood;
The boy had fewer summers, but his heart
Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him; he had look'd
Upon it till it could not pass away; 50
He had no breath, no being, but in her's;
She was his voice; he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words; she was his sight,
For his eye followed her's, and saw with her's,
Which coloured all his objects: — he had ceased
To life within himself; she was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all: upon a tone,
A touch of her's, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously — his heart 60
Unknowing of its cause of agony.
But she in these fond feelings had no share:
Her sighs were not for him; to her he was
Even as a brother — but no more; 'twas much,
For brotherless she was, save in the name
Her infant friendship had bestowed on him;
Herself the solitary scion left
Of a time-honoured race. — It was a name
Which pleased him, and yet pleased him not and
why?

Time taught him a deep answer — when she loved 70
Another; even *now* she loved another,
And on the summit of that hill she stood
Looking afar if yet her lover's steed
Kept pace with her expectancy, and flew.

III.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
There was an ancient mansion, and before
Its walls there was a steed caparisoned:
Within an antique Oratory stood
The Boy of whom I spake; — he was alone,
And pale, and pacing to and fro; anon 80
He sate him down, and seized a pen, and traced
Words which I could not guess of; then he lean'd
His bow'd head on his hands, and shook as 'twere
With a convulsion — then arose again,
And with his teeth and quivering hands did tear
What he had written, but he shed no tears.
And he did calm himself, and fix his brow
Into a kind of quiet; as he paused,
The Lady of his love re-entered there,
She was serene and smiling then, and yet 90
She knew she was by him beloved, — she knew,
For quickly comes such knowledge, that his heart
Was darken'd with her shadow, and she saw

That he was wretched, but she saw not all.
He rose, and with a cold and gentle grasp
He took her hand; a moment o'er his face
A tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced, and then it faded, as it came;
He dropped the hand he held, and with slow steps
Retired, but not as bidding her adieu, 100
For they did part with mutual smiles; he pass'd
From out the massy gate of that old Hall,
And mounting on his steed he went his way;
And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more.

IV.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Boy was sprung to manhood: in the wilds
Of fiery climes he made himself a home,
And his Soul drank their sunbeams; he was girt
With strange and dusky aspects; he was not
Himself like what he had been; on the sea 110
And on the shore he was a wanderer;
There was a mass of many images
Crowded like waves upon me, but he was
A part of all; and in the last he lay
Reposing from the noon-tide sultriness,
Couched among fallen columns, in the shade
Of ruin'd walls that had survived the names

Of those who rear'd them; by his sleeping side
Stood camels grazing, and some goodly steeds
Were fasten'd near a fountain; and a man 120
Clad in a flowing garb did watch the while,
While many of his tribe slumber'd around:
And they were canopied by the blue sky,
So cloudless, clear, und purely beautiful,
That God alone was to be seen in Heaven.

V.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love was wed with One
Who did not love her better; — in her home,
A thousand leagues from his, — her native home,
She dwelt, begirt with growing Infancy, 130
Daughters and sons of Beauty, — but behold!
Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.
What could her grief be? — she had all she loved,
And he who had so loved her was not there
To trouble with bad hopes, or evil wish,
Or ill-repress'd affliction, her pure thoughts.
What could her grief be? — see had loved him, not, 140
Nor given him cause to deem himself beloved,

Nor could he be a part of that which prey'd
Upon her mind — a spectre of the past.

VI.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream. —
The Wanderer was return'd. — I saw him stand
Before an Altar — with a gentle bride;
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The Starlight of his Boyhood; — as he stood
Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came
The selfsame aspect, and the quivering shock 150
That in the antique Oratory shook
His bosom in its solitude; and then —
As in that hour — a moment o'er his face
The tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced, — and then it faded as it came,
And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,
And all things reel'd around him; he could see
Not that which was, nor that which should have
been —

But the old mansion, and the accustom'd hall, 160
And the remembered chambers, and the place,
The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,
All things pertaining to that place and hour,
And her who was his destiny, came back

And thrust themselves between him and the light;
What business had they there at such a time?

VII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love; — Oh! she was changed
As by the sickness of the soul; her mind
Had wandered from its dwelling, and her eyes 170
They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth; she was become
The queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
Were combinations of disjointed things;
And forms impalpable and unperceived
Of others' sight familiar were to her's.
And this the world calls phrenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness, and the glance
Of melancholy is a fearful gift;
What is it but the telescope of truth? 180
Which strips she distance of its phantasies,
And brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality too real!

VIII.

And change came o'er the spirit of my dream. —
The Wanderer was alone as heretofore,
The beings which surrounded him were gone,

Or were at war with him; he was a mark
For blight and desolation, compass'd round
With Hatred and Contention; Pain was mix'd
In all which was served up to him, until 190
Like to the Pontic monarch of old days,⁶
He fed on poisons, and they had no power,
But were a kind of nutriment; he lived
Through that which had been death to many men,
And made him friends of mountains: with the stars
And the quick Spirit of the Universe
He held his dialogues; and they did teach
To him the magic of their mysteries;
To him the book of Night was opened wide,
And voices from the deep abyss reveal'd 200
A marvel and a secret — Be it so.

IX.

My dream was past; it had no further change.
It was of a strange order, that the doom
Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
Almost like a reality — the one
To end in madness — both in misery.

P R O M E T H E U S.

I.

TITAN . to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.

II.

Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,

And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refused thee even the boon to die:
The wretched gift eternity
Was thine — and thou hast borne it well.
All that the 'Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack;
The fate thou didst so well foresee
But would not to appease him tell;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

III.

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,

Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funeral destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself — an equal to all woes,
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concentered recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

N O T E S.
TO THE
PRISONER OF CHILLON etc.

Note 1, page 8, line 5.

By Bonnivard! — May none those marks efface!

François de Bonnivard, fils de Louis de Bonnivard, originaire de Seyssel et Seigneur de Lunes, naquit en 1496; il fit ses études à Turin: en 1510 Jean Aimé de Bonnivard, son oncle, lui resigna le Prieuré de St. Victor, qui aboutissoit aux murs de Genève, et qui formait un bénéfice considerable.

Ce grand homme (Bonnivard mérite ce titre par la force de son âme, la droiture de son cœur, la noblesse de ses intentions, la sagesse de ses conseils, le courage de ses démarches, l'étendue de ses connaissances et la vivacité de son esprit), ce grand homme, qui excitera l'admiration de tous ceux qu'une vertu héroïque peut encore émouvoir, inspirera encore la plus vive reconnaissance dans les cœurs

des Genevois qui aiment Genève. Bonnivard en fut toujours un des plus fermes appuis : pour assurer la liberté de nôtre République, il ne craignit pas de perdre souvent la sienne ; il oublia son repos ; il méprisa ses richesses ; il ne négligea rien pour affermir le bonheur d'une patrie qu'il honora de son choix : dès ce moment il la chérit comme le plus zélé de ses citoyens ; il la servit avec l'intrépidité d'un héros, et il écrivit son Histoire avec la naïveté d'un philosophe et la chaleur d'un patriote.

Il dit dans le commencement de son histoire de Genève, *que, des qu'il eut commencé de lire l'histoire des nations, il se sentit entraîné par son goût pour les Républiques, dont il épousa toujours les intérêts : c'est ce goût pour la liberté qui lui fit sans doute adopter Genève pour sa patrie.*

Bonnivard, encore jeune, s'annonça hautement comme le défenseur de Genève contre le Duc de Savoye et l'Evêque.

En 1519, Bonnivard devint le martyr de sa patrie : Le Duc de Savoye étant entré dans Genève avec cinq cent hommes, Bonnivard craint le ressentiment du Duc ; il voulut se retirer à Fribourg pour en éviter les suites ; mais il fut trahi par deux hommes qui l'accompagnoient, et conduit par ordre du Prince à Grolée, où il resta prisonnier pendant deux ans. Bonnivard étoit malheureux dans ses voyages, comme ses malheurs n'avoient point ralenti son zèle pour Genève, il étoit toujours un ennemi redoutable pour ceux qui la menaçoient, et par conséquent il devoit être exposé à leurs coups. Il fut rencontré en 1530 sur le Jura par des voleurs, qui le dépouillèrent, et qui le mirent encore entre les mains du Duc de Savoye : ce Prince le fit enfermer dans le Château de Chillon, où il resta sans

être interrogé jusques en 1536 : il fut alors delivré par les Bernois, qui s'emparèrent du Pays de Vaud.

Bonnivard, en sortant de sa captivité, eut le plaisir de trouver Genève libre et réformée ; la République s'empessa de lui témoigner sa reconnoissance et de le dédommager des maux qu'il avoit soufferts ; elle le reçut Bourgeois de la ville au mois de Juin 1536 ; elle lui donna la maison habitée autrefois par le Vicaire - Général, et elle lui assigna une pension de 200 écus d'or tant qu'il séjourneroit à Genève. Il fut admis dans le Conseil des Deux - Cent en 1557.

Bonnivard n'a pas fini d'être utile : après avoir travaillé à rendre Genève libre, il réussit à la rendre tolérante. Bonnivard engagea le Conseil à accorder aux Ecclesiastiques et aux paysans un tems suffisant pour examiner les propositions qu'on leur faisoit ; il réussit par sa douceur : on prêche toujours le Christianisme avec succès quand on le prêche avec charité.

Bonnivard fut savant ; ses manuscrits, qui sont dans la Bibliothèque publique, prouvent qu'il avoit bien lu les auteurs classiques latins, et qu'il avoit approfondi la théologie et l'histoire. Ce grand homme aimoit les sciences, et il croyoit qu'elles pouvoient faire la gloire de Genève ; aussi il ne négligea rien pour les fixer dans cette ville naissante ; en 1551 il donna sa bibliothèque au public ; elle fut le commencement de notre bibliothèque publique ; et ces livres sont en partie les rares et belles éditions du quinzième siècle qu'on voit dans notre collection, Enfin, pendant la même année, ce bon patriote institua la Republi-

que son héritière, à condition qu'elle employeroit ses biens à entretenir le collège dont on projettoit la fondation.

Il paroît que Bonnivard mourut en 1570; mais on ne peut l'assurer, parcequ'il y a une lacune dans le Nécrologe depuis le mois de Juillet 1570 jusques en 1571.

Note 2, page 9, line 3.

In a single night.

Ludovico Sforza, and others. — The same is asserted of Marie Antoinette's, the wife of Louis XVI. though not in quite so short a period. Grief is said to have the same effect: to such, and not to fear, this change in *her's* was to be attributed.

Note 3, page 14, line 5.

From Chillon's snow-white battlement.

The Chateau de Chillon is situated between Clarens and Villeneuve, which last is at one extremity of the Lake of Geneva. On its left are the entrances of the Rhone, and opposite are the Heights of Melleirie and the range of Alps above Boveret and St. Gingo.

Near it, on a hill behind, is a torrent; below it, washing its walls, the lake has been fathomed to the depth of 800 feet (French measure); within it are a range of dungeons, in which the early reformers, and subsequently prisoners of state, were confined. Across one of the vaults is a beam black with age, on which we were informed that the condemned were formerly executed. In

the cells are seven pillars, or, rather, eight, one being half merged in the wall; in some of these are rings for the fetters and the fettered: in the pavement the steps of Bonnivard have left their traces — he was confined here several years.

It is by this castle that Rousseau has fixed the catastrophe of his Heloise, in the rescue of one of her children by Julie from the water; the shock of which, and the illness produced by the immersion, is the cause of her death.

The chateau is large, and seen along the lake for a great distance. The walls are white.

Note 4, page 23, line 15.

And then there was a little isle.

Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island; the only one I could perceive, in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference. It contains a few trees, (I think not above three,) and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view.

When the foregoing poem was composed I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonnivard, or I should have endeavoured to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues. Some account of his life will be found in a note appended to the "Sonnet on Chillon," with which I have been furnished by the kindness of a citizen of that Republic which is still proud

54 NOTES TO THE PRISONER OF CHILLON etc.

of the memory of a man worthy of the best age of ancient freedom.

Note 5, page 26, line 2.

Leman! these names are worthy of thy shore.

Genevra, Ferney, Coppet, Lausanne.

Note 6, page 45, line 5.

Like to the Pontic monarch of old days.

Mithridates of Pontus.

MANFRED.

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
“Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

MANEED

There are more things in heaven and earth,
Than our dream of it, our philosophy.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

MANFRED.

CHAMOIS HUNTER.

ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.

MANUEL.

HERMAN.

WITCH OF THE ALPS.

ARIMANES.

NEMESIS.

THE DESTINIES.

SPIRITS etc.

*The Scene of the Drama is amongst the Higher Alps —
partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the
Mountains.*

DRAMA TITIS PERSONAE

MARCO
CARLO
ANTONIO
ALESSANDRO
FRANCESCO

FRANCESCO
ALESSANDRO
CARLO
ANTONIO
MARCO

FRANCESCO
ALESSANDRO
CARLO
ANTONIO
MARCO

MANFRED.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

MANFRED *alone* — *Scene, a Gothic gallery* — *Time, Midnight.*

MAN. **T**HE lamp must be replenish'd, but even then
It will not burn so long as I must watch:
My slumbers — if I slumber — are not sleep,
But a continuance of enduring thought,
Which then I can resist not: in my heart
There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
To look within; and yet I live, and bear
The aspect and the form of breathing men.

But grief should be the instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
Philosophy and science, and the springs
Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world,
I have essayed, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself —
But they avail not: I have done men good,
And I have met with good even among men —
But this avail'd not: I have had my foes,
And none have baffled, many fallen before me —
But this avail'd not: — Good, or evil, life,
Powers, passions, all I see in other beings,
Have been to me as rain unto the sands,
Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
Nor fluttering throb, that beats with hopes or
wishes,
Or lurking love of something on the earth. —
Now to my task! —

Mysterious Agency,
Ye spirits of the unbounded Universe!
Whom I have sought in darkness and in light —
Ye, who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler essence — ye, to whom the tops

Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,
And earth's and ocean's caves familiar things —
I call upon ye by the written charm
Which gives me power upon you — Rise! appear!
[*A pause.*

They come not yet. — Now by the voice of him
Who is the first among you — by this sign,
Which makes you tremble — by the claims of him
Who is undying, — Rise! appear! — Appear!
[*A pause.*

If it be so — Spirits of earth and air,
Ye shall not thus elude me; by a power,
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
Which had its birth-place in a star condemn'd,
The burning wreck of a demolish'd world,
A wandering hell in the eternal space;
By the strong course which is upon my soul,
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will. — Appear!

[*A star is seen at the darker end of the gallery,
it is stationary; and a voice is heard singing.*]

FIRST SPIRIT.

Mortal! to thy bidding bow'd,
From my mansion in the cloud,
Which the breath of twilight builds,
And the summer's sun-set gilds

With the azure and vermilion;
Which is mix'd for my pavilion:
Though thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridden;
To thine adjuration bow'd,
Mortal — be thy wish avow'd!

Voice of the SECOND SPIRIT.

Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains,
They crowned him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a diadem of snow.
Around his waist are forests braced,
The Avalanche in his hand;
But ere it fall, that thundering ball
Must pause for my command.
The Glacier's cold and restless mass
Moves onward day by day;
But I am he who bids it pass,
Or with its ice delay.
I am the spirit of the place,
Could make the mountain bow
And quiver to his cavern'd base —
And what with me wouldst *Thou*?

Voice of the THIRD SPIRIT.

In the blue depth of the waters,
Where the wave hath no strife,
Where the wind is a stranger,
And the sea-snake hath life,
Where the Mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells;
Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells;
O'er my calm Hall of Coral
The deep echo roll'd —
To the Spirit of Ocean
Thy wishes unfold!

FOURTH SPIRIT.

Where the slumbering earthquake
Lies pillow'd on fire,
And the lakes of bitumen
Rise boilingly higher;
Where the roots of the Andes
Strike deep in the earth,
As their summits to heaven
Shoot soaringly forth;
I have quitted my birth-place,
Thy bidding to bide —

Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy will be my guide!

FIFTH SPIRIT.

I am the Rider of the wind,
The Stirrer of the storm;
The hurricane I left behind
Is yet with lightning warm;
To speed to thee, o'er shore and sea
I swept upon the blast:
The fleet I met sailed well, and yet
'Twill sink ere night be past.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

My dwelling is the shadow of the night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

SEVENTH SPIRIT.

The star which rules thy destiny,
Was ruled, ere earth began, by me:
It was a world as fresh and fair
As e'er revolved round sun in air;
Its course was free and regular,
Space bosom'd not a lovelier star.
The hour arrived — and it became
A wandering mass of shapeless flame,

A pathless comet, and a curse,
The menace of the universe;
Still rolling on with innate force,
Without a sphere, without a course,
A bright deformity on high,
The monster of the upper sky!
And thou! beneath its influence born —
Thou worm! whom I obey and scorn —
Forced by a power (which is not thine,
And lent thee but to make thee mine)
For this brief moment to descend,
Where these weak spirits round thee bend
And parley with a thing like thee —
What wouldst thou, Child of Clay! with me?

The SEVEN SPIRITS.

Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds,
thy star,

Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay!
Before thee at thy quest their spirits are —
What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals —
say?

MAN. Forgetfulness —

FIRST SPIRIT. Of what — of whom — and why?

MAN. Of that which is within me; read it there —
Ye know it, and I cannot utter it.

SPIRIT. We can but give thee that which we possess:

Ask of us subjects, sovereignty, the power
O'er earth, the whole, or portion, or a sign
Which shall control the elements, whereof
We are the dominators, each and all,
These shall be thine.

MAN. Oblivion, self-oblivion —
Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms
Ye offer so profusely what I ask?

SPIRIT. It is not in our essence, in our skill;
But — thou mayst die.

MAN. Will death bestow it on me?

SPIRIT. We are immortal, and do not forget;
We are eternal; and to us the past
Is, as the future, present. Art thou answered?

MAN. Ye mock me — but the power which
brought ye here

Hath you made mine, Slaves, scoff not at my will!
The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far-darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd in clay!
Answer, or I will teach ye what I am.

SPIRIT. We answer as we answered; our reply
Is even in thine own words.

MAN. Why say ye so?

SPIRIT. If, as thou say'st, thine essence be as
ours,

We have replied in telling thee, the thing
Mortals call death, hath nought to do with us.

MAN. I then have call'd ye from your realms
in vain;

Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.

SPIRIT. Say;

What we possess we offer; it is thine:

Bethink ere thou dismiss us, ask again —

Kingdom, and sway, and strength, and length of
days —

MAN. Accursed! what have I to do with days?
They are too long already. — Hence — begone!

SPIRIT. Yet pause: being here, our will would
do thee service!

Bethink thee, is there then no other gift

Which we can make not worthless in thine eyes?

MAN. No, none: yet stay — one moment, ere
we part —

I would behold ye face to face. I hear

Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,

As music on the waters; and I see

The steady aspect of a clear large star;

But nothing more. Approach me as ye are,

Or one, or all, in your accustom'd forms.

SPIRIT. We have no forms beyond the elements
Of which we are the mind and principle:
But choose a form — in that we will appear.

MAN. I have no choice; there is no form on earth
Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting. — Come!

SERVENTH SPIRIT. (*Appearing in the shape of
a beautiful female figure.*) Behold!

MAN. Oh God! if it be thus, and *thou*
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy, — I will clasp thee,
And we again will be — [*The figure vanishes.*

My heart is crush'd!

[*MANFRED falls senseless.*

(*A voice is heard in the Incantation which follows.*)

When the moon is on the wave,

And the glow-worm in the grass,

And the meteor on the grave,

And the wisp on the morass;

When the falling stars are shooting,

And the answer'd owls are hooting,

And the silent leaves are still

In the shadow of the hill,

Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep.
There are shades which will not vanish;
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gathered in a cloud;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turn'd around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse,

And a spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
And to thee shall Night deny
All the quiet of her sky;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring;
From thy own smile I snatch'd the snake,
For there it coil'd as in a brake;
From thy own lip I drew the charm
Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile.
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art
Which pass'd for human thine own heart;

By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,
I call upon thee! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell!

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear;
Lo! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been pass'd — now wither!

SCENE II.

The Mountain of the Jungfrau. — Time, Morning. —

MANFRED alone upon the Cliffs.

MAN. The spirits I have raised abandon me —
The spells which I have studied baffle me —
The remedy I reck'd of tortured me;
I lean no more on super-human aid,
It hath no power upon the past, and for
The future, till the past be gulfd in darkness,

It is not of my search. — My mother Earth!
And thou, fresh breaking Day, and you, ye
Mountains,

Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright eye of the universe,
That openest over all, and unto all
Art a delight — thou shin'st not on my heart.
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shroubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest for ever — wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse — yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril — yet do not recede;
And my brain reels — and yet my foot is firm:
There is a power upon me which withholds
And makes it my fatality to live;
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of spirit, and to be
My own soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself —
The last infirmity of evil. Ay,
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,

[*An eagle passes.*]

Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,
Well may'st thou swoop so near me — I should be
Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above
With a pervading vision. — Beautiful!
How beautiful is all this visible world!
How glorious in its action and itself;
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will
Till our mortality predominates,
And men are — what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other. Hark! the note,
 [*The Shepherd's pipe in the distance is heard.*]
'The natural music of the mountain reed —
For here the patriarchal days are not
A pastoral fable — pipes in the liberal air,
Mix'd with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd;
My soul would drink those echoes. — Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,

A bodiless enjoyment — born and dying
With the blest tone which made me!

Enter from below a CHAMOIS HUNTER.

CHAMOIS HUNTER.

Even so

This way the chamois leapt: her nimble feet
Have baffled me: my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail. — What is here?
Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reach'd
A height which none even of our mountaineers,
Save our best hunters, may attain: his garb
Is goodly, his mien manly, and his air
Proud as a free-born peasant's, at this distance. —
I will approach him nearer.

MAN. (*not perceiving the other.*) To be thus —
Grey-hair'd with anguish, like these blasted pines,
Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,
A blighted trunk upon a cursed root,
Which but supplies a feeling to decay —
And to be thus, eternally but thus,
Having been otherwise! Now furrow'd o'er
With wrinkles, plough'd by moments, not by years;
And hours — all tortured into ages — hours
Which I outlive! — Ye toppling crags of ice!
Ye avalanches, whom a breath draws down
In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me!

I hear ye momentarily above, beneath,
Crash with a frequent conflict; but ye pass,
And only fall on things which still would live;
On the young flourishing forest, or the hut
And hamlet of the harmless villager.

C. HUN. The mists begin to rise from up the
valley;

I'll warn him to descend, or he may chance
To lose at once his way and life together.

MAN. The mists boil up around the glaciers;
clouds

Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
Like foam from the roused ocean of deep Hell,
Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heaped with the damn'd like pebbles. — I am giddy.

C. HUN. I must approach him cautiously; if
near,

A sudden step will startle him, and he
Seems tottering already.

MAN. Mountains have fallen,
Leaving a gap in the clouds, and with the shock
Rocking their Alpine brethren; filling up
The ripe green valleys with destruction's splinters;
Damming the rivers with a sudden dash,
Which crush'd the waters into mist, and made
Their fountains find another channel — thus,

Thus, in its old age, did Mount Rosenberg —
Why stood I not beneath it?

C. HUN. Friend have a care,
Your next step may be fatal! — for the love
Of him who made you, stand not on that brink!

MAN. (*not hearing him.*) Such would have been
for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth;
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime — as thus — thus they
shall be —

In this one plunge. — Farewell, ye opening heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully —
Ye were not meant for me — Earth! take these
atoms!

(*As MANFRED is in act to spring from the cliff,
the CHAMOIS HUNTER seizes and retains him
with a sudden grasp.*)

C. HUN. Hold, madman! — though aweary of
thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty blood, —
Away with me — I will not quit my hold.

MAN. I am most sick at heart — nay, grasp
me not —
I am all feebleness — the mountains whirl

Spinning around me — I grow blind — What art thou?

C. HUN. I'll answer that anon. — Away with me —
The clouds grow thicker — there — now lean on me —
Place your foot here — here, take this staff, and cling
A moment to that shrub — now give me your hand,
And hold fast by my girdle — softly — well —
The Chalet will be gained within an hour —
Come on, we'll quickly find a surer footing,
And something like a pathway, which the torrent
Hath wash'd since winter. — Come, 'tis bravely
done —

You should have been a hunter. — Follow me.

*(As they descend the rocks with difficulty,
the scene closes.)*

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT II.

S C E N E I.

A Cottage amongst the Bernese Alps.

MANFRED and the CHAMOIS HUNTER.

C. HUN. No, no — yet pause — thou must
not yet go forth:

Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other, for some hours, at least;
When thou art better, I will be thy guide —
But whither?

MAN. It imports not: I do know
My route full well, and need no further guidance.

C. HUN. Thy garb and gait bespeak thee of
high lineage —

One of the many chiefs, whose castled crags
Look o'er the lower valleys — which of these
May call thee Lord? I only know their portals;
My way of life leads me but rarely down
To bask by the huge hearths of those old halls,
Carousing with the vassals; but the paths,

Which step from out our mountains to their doors,
I know from childhood — which of these is thine?

MAN. No matter.

C. HUN. Wel', sir, pardon me the question,
And be of better cheer. Come, taste my wine;
'Tis of an ancient vintage; many a day
'T has thawed my veins among our glaciers, now
Let it do thus for thine — Come, pledge me fairly.

MAN. Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never — never sink in the earth?

C. HUN. What dost thou mean? thy senses
wander from thee.

MAN. I say 'tis blood — my blood! the pure
warm stream

Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed: but still it rises up,
Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from heaven,
Where thou art not — and I shall never be.

C. HUN. Man of strange words, and some
halfmaddening sin,

Which makes thee people vacancy, whate'er
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet —
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience —

MAN. Patience and patience! Hence — that
word was made —
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey;
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine, —
I am not of thine order.

C. HUN. Thanks to heaven!
I would not be of thine for the free fame
Of William Tell; but whatso'er thine ill,
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless.

MAN. Do I not bear it? — Look on me — I live.

C. HUN. This is convulsion, and no healthful life.

MAN. I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now
To those which I must number: ages — ages —
Space and eternity — and consciousness,
With the fierce thirst of death — and still unslaked!

C. HUN. Why, on thy brow the seal of middle age
Hath scarce been set; I am thine elder far.

MAN. Think'st thou existence doth depend on
time?

It doth; but actions are our epochs: mine
Have made my days and nights imperishable,
Endless, and all alike, as sands on the shore,
Innumerable atoms; and one desert,
Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break,

But nothing rests, save carcases and wrecks,
Rocks, and the salt-surf weeds of bitterness.

C. HUN. Alas! he's mad — but yet I must not leave him.

MAN. I would I were — for then the things I see
Would be but a distempered dream.

C. HUN. What is it
That thou dost see, or think thou look'st upon?

MAN. Myself, and thee — a peasant of the Alps —
Thy humble virtues, hospitable home,
And spirit patient, pious, proud and free;
Thy self-respect, grafted on innocent thoughts;
Thy days of health, and nights of sleep; thy toils,
By danger dignified, yet guiltless; hopes
Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave,
With cross and garland over its green turf,
And thy grandchildren's love for epitaph;
This do I see — and then I look within —
It matters not — my soul was scorch'd already!

C. HUN. And would'st thou then exchange thy
lot for mine?

MAN. No, friend! I would not wrong thee,
nor exchange
My lot with living being; I can bear —
However wretchedly, 'tis still to bear —

In life what others could not brook to dream,
But perish in their slumber.

C. HUN. And with this —
This cautious feeling for another's pain,
Canst thou be black with evil? — say not so.
Can one of gentle thoughts have wreak'd revenge
Upon his enemies?

MAN. Oh! no, no, no!
My injuries came down on those who loved me —
On those whom I best loved: I never quell'd
An enemy, save in my just defence —
But my embrace was fatal.

C. HUN. Heaven give thee rest!
And penitence restore thee to thyself;
My prayers shall be for thee.

MAN. I need them not,
But can endure thy pity. I depart —
'Tis time — farewell! — Here's gold, and thanks
for thee —

No words — it is thy due. — Follow me not —
I know my path — the mountain peril's past: —
And once again, I charge thee, follow not!

[Exit MANFRED.]

SCENE II.

A lower Valley in the Alps. — A Cataract,

Enter MANFRED.

It is not noon — the sunbow's rays¹ still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
And fling its lines of foaming light along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse. No eyes
But mine now drink this sight of loveliness;
I should be sole in this sweet solitude,
And with the Spirit of the place divide
The homage of these waters. — I will call her.

(MANFRED takes some of the water into the palm of his hand; and flings it in the air, muttering the adjuration. After a pause, the WITCH OF THE ALPS rises beneath the arch of the sunbeam of the torrent.)

MAN. Beautiful Spirit! with thy hair of light,
And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
The charms of Earth's least-mortal daughters grow
To an unearthly stature, in an essence
Of purer elements; while the hues of youth, —
Carnation'd like a sleeping infant's cheek,
Rock'd by the beating of her mother's heart,
Or the rose tints, which summer's twilight leaves
Upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow,
The blush of earth embracing with her heaven, —
Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make tame
The beauties of the sunbow which bends o'er thee.
Beautiful Spirit in thy calm clear brow,
Wherein is glass'd serenity of soul,
Which of itself shows immortality,
I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit
At times to commune with them — if that he
Avail him of his spells — to call thee thus,
And gaze on thee a moment.

WITCH. Son of Earth!

I know thee, and the powers which give thee power;
I know thee for a man of many thoughts,
And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both,
Fatal and fated in thy sufferings.
I have expected this — what wouldst thou with me?

MAN. To look upon thy beauty — nothing further.
The face of the earth hath madden'd me, and I
Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce
To the abodes of those who govern her —
But they can nothing aid me. I have sought
From them what they could not bestow, and now
I search no further.

WITCH. What could be the quest
Which is not in the power of the most powerful,
The rulers of the invisible?

MAN. A boon;
But why should I repeat it? 'twere in vain.

WITCH. I know not that; let thy lips utter it.

MAN. Well, though it torture me, 'tis but the
same;

My pang shall find a voice. From my youth upwards
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,
Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh;
Nor midst the creatures of clay that girded me
Was there but one who — but of her anon.
I said, with men, and with the thoughts of men,

I held but slight communion; but instead,
My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave
Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.
In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their developement; or catch
The dazzling lightnings, till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look, list'ning, on the scattered leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one, —
Hating to be so, — cross'd me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again. And then I dived,
In my lone wanderings, to the caves of death,
Searching its cause in its effect; and drew
From wither'd bones, and skulls, and heap'd up dust,
Conclusions most forbidden. Then I pass'd
The nights of years in sciences untaught,
Save in the old-time; and with time and toil,
And terrible ordeal, and such penance

As in itself hath power upon the air,
And spirits that do compass air and earth,
Space, and the peopled infinite, I made
Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,
Such as, before me, did the Magi, and
He who from out their fountain dwellings raised
Eros and Anteros², at Gadara,
As I do thee; — and with my knowledge grew
The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy
Of this most bright intelligence, until —

WITCH. Proceed.

MAN. Oh! I but thus prolonged my words,
Boasting these idle attributes, because
As I approach the core of my heart's grief —
But to my task! I have not named to thee
Father or mother, mistress, friend, or being,
With whom I wore the chain of human ties;
If I had such, they seem'd not such to me —
Yet there was one —

WITCH. Spare not thyself — proceed!

MAN. She was like me in lineaments — her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty;
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind

Then cursed myself till sunset; — I have pray'd
For madness as a blessing — 'tis denied me.
I have affronted death — but in the war
Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
And fatal things pass'd harmless — the cold hand
Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
Back by a single hair, which would not break.
In phantasy, imagination, all,
The affluence of my soul — which one day was
A Croesus in creation — I plunged deep,
But, like an ebbing wave, it dash'd me back
Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought.
I plunged amidst mankind — Forgetfulness
I sought in all, save where 'tis to be found,
And that I have to learn — my sciences,
My long pursued and super-human art,
Is mortal here — I dwell in my despair —
And live — and live for ever.

WITCH. It may be
That I can aid thee.

MAN. To do this thy power
Must wake the dead, or lay me low with them.
Do so — in any shape — in any hour —
With any torture — so it be the last.

WITCH. That is not in my province; but
if thou

Wilt swear obedience to my will, and do
My bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes.

MAN. I will not swear — Obey! and whom?
the spirits

Whose presence I command, and be the slave
Of those who served me — Never!

WITCH. Is this all?

Hast thou no gentler answer? — Yet bethink thee
And pause ere thou rejectest.

MAN. I have said it.

WITCH. Enough! — I may retire then — say!

MAN. Retire!

[*The WITCH disappears.*

MAN. (*alone.*) We are the fools of time and terror:
Days

Steal on us and steal from us; yet we live;
Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.
In all the days of this detested yoke —
This vital weight upon the struggling heart,
Which sinks with sorrow, or beats quick with pain,
Or joy that ends in agony or faintness —
In all the days of past and future, for
In life there is no present, we can number
How few — how less than few — wherein the soul
Forbears to pant for death, and yet draws back
As from a stream in winter, though the chill

Be but a moment's. I have one resource
Still in my science — I can call the dead,
And ask them what it is we dread to be:
The sternest answer can but be the Grave,
And that is nothing — if they answer not —
The buried Prophet answered to the Hag
Of Endor; and the Spartan Monarch drew
From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
An answer and his destiny — he slew
That which he loved, unknowing what he slew,
And died unpardon'd — though he call'd in aid
The Phyxian Jove, and in Phigalia roused
The Arcadian Evocators to compel
The indignant shadow to depose her wrath,
Or fix her term of vengeance — she replied
In words of dubious import, but fulfill'd. ⁵

If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful —
Happy and giving happiness. What is she?
What is she now? — a sufferer for my sins —
A thing I dare not think upon — or nothing.
Within few hours I shall not call in vain —
Yet in this hour I dread the thing I dare:
Until this hour I never shrunk to gaze

On spirit, good or evil — now I tremble,
And feel a strange cold thaw upon my heart,
But I can act even what I most abhor,
And champion human fears.—The night approaches.
[Exit.]

SCENE III.

The Summit of the Jungfrau Mountain.

Enter FIRST DESTINY.

The moon is rising broad, and round, and bright;
And here on snows, where never human foot
Of common mortal trod, we nightly tread,
And leave no traces; o'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam,
Frozen in a moment — a dead whirlpool's image;
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork of some earthquake—where the clouds
Pause to repose themselves in passing by —
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils;
Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes, for to-night
Is our great festival — 'tis strange they come not.

A Voice without, singing.

The Captive Usurper,
Hurl'd down from the throne,
Lay buried in torpor,
Forgotten and lone;
I broke through his slumbers,
I shivered his chain,
I leagued him with numbers —
He's Tyrant again!

With the blood of a million he'll answer my care,
With a nation's destruction — his flight and despair.

Second Voice, without.

The ship sail'd on, the ship sail'd fast,
But I left not a sail, and I left not a mast;
There is not a plank of the hull or the deck,
And there is not a wretch to lament o'er his wreck;
Save one, whom I held, as he swam, by the *hair*,
And he was a subject well worthy my care;
A traitor on land, and a pirate at sea —
But I saved him to wreak further havoc for me!

FIRST DESTINY, *answering.*

The city lies sleeping;

The morn, to deplore it,
May dawn on it weeping.

Sullenly, slowly,
The black plague flew o'er it —

Thousands lie lowly;
Tens of thousands shall perish —

The living shall fly from
The sick they should cherish;

But nothing can vanquish
The touch that they die from.

Sorrow and anguish,
And evil and dread,

Envelope a nation —
The blest are the dead,

Who see not the sight
Of their own desolation. —

This work of a night —

This wreck of a realm — this deed of my doing —
For ages I've done, and shall still be renewing!

Enter the SECOND and THIRD DESTINIES.

The Three.

Our hands contain the hearts of men,
Our footsteps are their graves;
We only give to take again
The spirits of our slaves!

FIRST DES. Welcome! — Where's Nemesis?

SECOND DES. At some great work;

But what I know not, for my hands were full.

THIRD DES. Behold she cometh.

Enter NEMESIS.

FIRST DES. Say, where hast thou been?

My sisters and thyself are slow to-night.

NEM. I was detain'd repairing shattered thrones,
Marrying fools, restoring dynasties,
Avenging men upon their enemies,
And making them repent their own revenge;
Goaded the wise to madness; from the dull
Shaping out oracles to rule the world
Afresh, for they were waxing out of date,
And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
To weigh kings in the balance, and to speak

Of freedom, the forbidden fruit. — Away!
We have outstaid the hour — mount we our clouds!
[*Exeunt.*

S C E N E I V.

*The Hall of Arimanes — Arimanes on his Throne,
a Globe of Fire, surrounded by the Spirits.*

Hymn of the SPIRITS.

Hail to our Master! — Prince of Earth and Air! —
Who walks the clouds and waters — in his hand
The sceptre of the elements, which tear
Themselves to chaos at his high command!
He breatheth — and a tempest shakes the sea;
He speaketh — and the clouds reply in thunder;
He gazeth — from his glance the sunbeams flee;
He moveth — earthquakes rend the world asunder.
Beneath his footsteps the volcanos rise;
His shadow is the Pestilence; his path
The comets herald through the crackling skies;
And planets turn to ashes at his wrath.
To him War offers daily sacrifice;
To him Death pays his tribute; Life is his,
With all its infinite of agonies —
And his the spirit of whatever is!

Enter the DESTINIES and NEMESIS.

FIRST. DES. Glory to Arimanes! on the earth
His power increaseth — both my sisters did
His bidding, nor did I neglect my duty!

SECOND DES. Glory to Arimanes! we who bow
The necks of men, bow down before his throne!

THIRD DES. Glory to Arimanes! — we await
His nod!

NEM. Sovereign of Sovereigns! we are thine,
And all that liveth, more or less, is ours,
And must things wholly so; still to increase
Our power, increasing thine, demands our care,
And we are vigilant — Thy late commands
Have been fulfilled to the utmost.

Enter MANFRED.

A SPIRIT. What is here?

A mortal! — Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
Bow down and worship!

SECOND SPIRIT. I do know the man —
A Magian of great power, and fearful skill!

THIRD SPIRIT. Bow down and worship, slave! —
What, know'st thou not
Thine and our Sovereign? — Tremble; and obey?

ALL THE SPIRITS. Prostrate thyself, and thy
condemned clay,
Child of the Earth! or dread the worst.

MAN. I know it;
And yet ye see I kneel not.

FOURTH SPIRIT. 'Twill be taught thee.

MAN. 'Tis taught already; — many a night
on the earth,
On the bare ground, have I bow'd down my face,
And strew'd my head with ashes; I have known
The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation.

FIFTH SPIRIT. Dost thou dare
Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
What the whole earth accords, beholding not
The terror of his Glory — Crouch! I say.

MAN. Bid *him* bow down to that which is above
him,
The overruling Infinite — the Maker
Who made him not for worship — let him kneel,
And we will kneel together.

THE SPIRITS. Crush the worm!
Tear him in pieces! —

FIRST DES. Hence! Avaunt! — he's mine.
Prince of the Powers invisible! This man

Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote; his sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature, like
Our own; his knowledge and his powers and will,
As far as is compatible with clay,
Which clogs the etherial essence, have been such
As clay hath seldom borne; his aspirations
Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
And they have only taught him what we know —
That knowledge is not happiness, and science
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.

This is not all — the passions, attributes
Of earth and heaven, from which no power, nor being,
Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
Have pierced his heart; and in their consequence
Made him a thing, which I, who pity not,
Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine,
And thine, it may be — be it so, or not,
No other Spirit in this region hath
A soul like his — or power upon his soul.

NEM. Whath doth he here then?

FIRST DES. Let him answer that.

MAN. Ye know what I have known; and without
power

I could not be amongst ye: but there are

Powers deeper still beyond — I come in quest
Of such, to answer unto what I seek

NEM. What wouldst thou?

MAN. Thou canst not reply to me.
Call up the dead — my question is for them.

NEM. Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch
The wishes of this mortal?

ARI. Yea.

NEM. Whom would'st thou
Uncharnel?

MAN. One without a tomb — call up
Astarte.

N E M E S I S.

Shadow! or Spirit!

Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit

The whole or a part
Of the form of thy birth;

Of the mould of thy clay,
Which returned to the earth,

Re-appear to the day!

Bear what thou borest,

The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest

Redeem from the worm.

Appear! — Appear! — Appear!

Who sent thee there requires thee here!

(*The Phantom of ASTARTE rises and stands in the midst.*)

MAR. Can this be death? there's bloom upon her
cheek;

But now I see it is no living hue,

But a strange hectic — like the unnatural red

Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.

It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread

To look upon the same — Astarte! — No,

I cannot speak to her — but bid her speak —

Forgive me or condemn me.

N E M E S I S.

By the power which hath broken

The grave which enthrall'd thee,

Speak to him who hath spoken,

Or those who have call'd thee!

MAN.

She is silent,

And in that silence I am more than answered.

NEM. My power extends no further. Prince of air!

It rests with thee alone — command her voice.

ARI. Spirit — obey this sceptre!

NEM.

Silent still!

She is not of our order, but belongs
To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain,
And we are baffled also.

MAN.

Hear me, hear me —

Astarte! my beloved! speak to me!
I have so much endured — so much endure —
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not — that I do bear
This punishment for both — that thou wilt be
One of the blessed — and that I shall die;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence — in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality —
A future like the past. I cannot rest.
I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art — and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music — Speak to me!
For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd
boughs,

And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answered me — many things answered me —
Spirits and men — but thou wert silent all.
Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.
Speak to me! I have wandered o'er the earth
And never found thy likeness — Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around — they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone —
Speak to me! though it be in wrath; — but say —
I reckon not what — but let me hear thee once —
This once — once more!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Manfred!

MAN. Say on, say on —
I live but in the sound — it is thy voice!

PHAN. Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly
ills.

Farewell!

MAN. Yet one word more — am I forgiven?

PHAN. Farewell!

MAN. Say, shall we meet again?

PHAN. Farewell!

MAN. One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me.

PHAN. Manfred!

[*The Spirit of ASTARTE disappears.*]

NEM. She's gone, and will not be recall'd;
Her words will be fulfil'd. Return to the earth!

— A SPIRIT. He is convulsed — This is to be
a mortal

And seek the things beyond mortality.

ANOTHER SPIRIT. Yet, see, he mastereth himself,
and makes

His torture tributary to his will.

Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.

NEM. Hast thou further question
Of our great sovereign, or his worshippers?

MAN. None.

NEM. Then for a time farewell.

MAN. We meet then? Where? On the earth?—
Even as thou wilt: and for the grace accorded
I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well!

[Exit MANFRED.]

(Scene closes.)

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Castle of Manfred.

MANFRED and HERMAN.

MAN. What is the hour?

HER. It wants but one till sunset,
And promises a lovely twilight,

MAN. Say,
Are all things so disposed of in the tower,
As I directed?

HER. All: my lord, are ready;
Here is the key and casket.

MAN. It is well:
Thou mayst retire. [Exit HERMAN.

MAN. (*alone.*) There is a calm upon me —
Inexplicable stillness! which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.
If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear

From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought "Kalon," found,
And seated in my soul. It will not last,
But it is well to have known it, though but once:
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
And I within my tablets would note down,
That there is such a feeling. Who is there?

Re-enter HERMAN.

My lord, the abbot of St. Maurice craves
To greet your presence.

Enter the ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.

ABBOT. Pease be with Count Manfred!

MAN. Thanks, holy father! welcome to these
walls!

Thy presence honours them, and blesseth those
Who dwell within them.

ABBOT. Would it were so, Count! —
But I would fain confer with thee alone.

MAN. Herman, retire. What would my reverend
guest?

ABBOT. Thus, without prelude: — Age and zeal,
my office,

And good intent, must plead my privilege;
Our near, though not acquainted neighbourhood,

May also be my herald. Rumours strange,
And of unholy nature, are abroad,
And busy with thy name; a noble name
For centuries; may he who bears it now,
Transmit it unimpair'd!

MAN. Proceed, — I listen.

ABBOT. 'Tis said thou holdest converse with
the things

Which are forbidden to the search of man;
That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the shade of death,
'Thou communest. I know that with mankind,
Thy fellows in creation, thou dost rarely
Exchange thy thoughts, and that thy solitude
Is as an anchorite's, were it but holy.

MAN. And what are they who do avouch these
things?

ABBOT. My pious brethren — the scared pea-
santry —

Even thy own vassals — who do look on thee
With most unquiet eyes. Thy life's in peril.

MAN. Take it!

ABBOT. I come to save, and not destroy —
I would not pry into thy secret soul;
But if these things be sooth, there still is time

For penitence and pity: reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church
to heaven!

MAN. I hear thee. This is my reply; whate'er
I may have been, or arm, doth rest between
Heaven and myself. — I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator. Have I sinn'd
Against your ordinances? prove and punish!

ABBOT. My son! I did not speak of punishment,
But penitence and pardon; — with thyself
The choice of such remains — and for the last,
Our institutions and our strong belief
Have given me power to smooth the path from sin
To higher hope and better thoughts; the first
I leave to heaven — “Vengeance is mine alone!”
So saith the Lord, and with all humbleness
His servant echoes back the awful word.

MAN. Old man! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
Of penitence — nor outward look — nor fast —
Nor agony — nor, greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep despair,
Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
Would make a hell of heaven — can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense

Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd
He deals on his own soul.

ABBOT. All this is well;
For this will pass away, and be succeeded
By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
With calm assurance to that blessed place,
Which all who seek may win, whatever be
Their earthly errors, so they be atoned:
And the commencement of atonement is
The sense of its necessity. — Say on —
And all our church can teach thee shall be taught;
And all we can absolve thee, shall be pardon'd.

MAN. When Rome's sixth Emperor was near
his last,
The victim of a self-inflicted wound,
To shun the torments of a public death
From senates once his slaves, a certain soldier,
With show of loyal pity, would have staunch'd
The gushing throat with his officious robe;
The dying Roman thrust him back and said —
Some empire still in his expiring glance,
“It is too late — is this fidelity?”

ABBOT. And what of this?

MAN. I answer with the Roman —
“It is too late!”

ABBOT. It never can be so,
To reconcile thyself with thy own soul,
And thy own soul with heaven. Hast thou no
hope?

’Tis strange — even those who do despair above,
Yet shape themselves some phantasy on earth,
To which frail twig they cling, like drowning men.

MAN. Ay — father! I have had those earthly
visions

And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither — it might be to fall;
But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss,
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies,)
Lies low but mighty still. — But this is past,
My thoughts mistook themselves.

ABBOT. And wherefore so?

MAN. I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway — and soothe —
and sue —

And watch all time — and pry into all place —
And be a living lie — who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such
The mass are; I disdained to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader — and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.

ABBOT. And why not live and act with other
men?

MAN, Because my nature was averse from life;
And yet not cruel; for I would not make,
But find a desolation: — like the wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone Simoom,
Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er
The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,
And revels o'er their wild and arid waves,
And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly; such hath been
The course of my existence; but there came
Things in my path which are no more.

ABBOT.

Alas!

I 'gin to fear that thou art past all aid
From me and from my calling; yet so young,
I still would —

MAN. Look on me! there is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become
Old in their youth, and died ere middle age,

Without the violence of warlike death;
Some perishing of pleasure — some of study —
Some worn with toil — some of mere weariness —
Some of disease — and some insanity —
And some of withered, or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are numbered in the lists of Fate,
Taking all shapes, and bearing many names.
Look upon me! for even of all these things
Have I partaken; and of all these things,
One were enough; then wonder not that I
Am what I am, but that I ever was,
Or having been, that I am still on earth.

ABBOT. Yet, hear me still —

MAN. Old man! I do respect
Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain;
Think me not churlish; I would spare thyself,
Far more than me, in shunning at this time
All further colloquy — and so — farewell!

[Exit MANFRED.]

ABBOT. This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos — light and darkness —

And mind and dust — and passions and pure
thoughts,
Mix'd, and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive: he will perish,
And yet he must not; I will try once more,
For such are worth redemption; and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end.
I'll follow him — but cautiously, though surely.
[Exit ABBOT.

SCENE II.

Another Chamber.

MANFRED and HERMAN.

HER. My Lord, you bade me wait on you at
sunset:

He sinks behind the mountain.

MAN. Doth he so?

I will look on him.

[MANFRED advances to the Window of the Hall.

Glorious Orb! the idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons⁴
Of the embrace of angels, with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring spirits who can ne'er return. —

Most glorious orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops, the
 hearts
Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they pour'd
Themselves in orisons! Thou material God!
And representative of the Unknown —
Who chose thee for his shadow! Thou chief star!
Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues
And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee,
Even as our outward aspects; — thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look: thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature. He is gone:
I follow.

[Exit MANFRED.]

SCENE III.

The Mountains. — The Castle of Manfred at some distance. — A Terrace before a Tower. — Time, Twilight.

HERMAN, MANUEL, and other Dependants of
MANFRED.

HER. 'Tis strange enough: night after night,
for years,
He hath pursued long vigils in this tower,
Without a witness. I have been within it, —
So have we all been oft-times; but from it,
Or its contents, it were impossible
To draw conclusions absolute, of aught
His studies tend to. To be sure, there is
One chamber where none enter; I would give
'The fee of what I have to come these three years,
To pore upon its mysteries.

MANUEL. 'Twere dangerous;
Content thyself with what thou knowest already.

HER. Ah! Manuel! thou art elderly and wise,
And could'st say much; thou hast dwelt within
the castle —

How many years is't?

MANUEL. Ere Count Manfred's birth,
I served his father, whom he nought resembles.

HER. There be more sons in like predicament.
But wherein do they differ?

MANUEL. I speak not
Of features or of form, but mind and habits:
Count Sigismund was proud, — but gay and
free, —

A warrior and a reveller; he dwelt not
With books and solitude, nor made the night
A gloomy vigil, but a festal time,
Merrier than day; he did not walk the rocks
And forests like a wolf, nor turn aside
From men and their delights.

HER. Beshrew the hour,
But those were jocund times! I would that such
Would visit the old walls again; they look
As if they had forgotten them.

MANUEL. These walls
Must change their chieftain first. Oh! I have seen
Some strange things in them, Herman.

HER. Come, be friendly;
Relate me some to while away our watch:
I've heard thee darkly speak of an event
Which happened hereabouts, by this same tower.

MANUEL. That was a night indeed; I do remember

'Twas twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening, — yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's pinnacle, so rested then, —
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon;
Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower, —
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings — her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love, —
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The lady Astarte, his —

Hush! who comes here?

Enter the ABBOT.

ABBOT. Where is your master?

HER. Yonder, in the tower.

ABBOT. I must speak with him.

MANUEL. 'Tis impossible;
He is most private, and must not he thus
Intruded on.

ABBOT. Upon myself I take
The forfeit of my fault, if fault there be —
But I must see him.

HER. Thou hast seen him once
This eve already.

ABBOT. Herman! I command thee,
Knock, and apprize the Count of my approach!

HER. We dare not.

ABBOT. Then it seems I must be herald
Of my own purpose.

MANUEL. Reverend father, stop —
I pray you pause.

ABBOT. Why so?

MANUEL. But step this way
And I will tell you further.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

*Interior of the Tower.*MANFRED *alone.*

MAN. The stars are forth, the moon above
the tops

Of the snow-shining mountains. — Beautiful!

I linger yet with Nature, for the night

Hath been to me a more familiar face

Than that of man; and in her starry shade

Of dim and solitary loveliness,

I learn'd the language of another world.

I do remember me, that in my youth,

When I was wandering, — upon such a night

I stood within the Colosseum's wall,

Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;

The trees which grew along the broken arches

Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars

Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar

The watchdog bayed beyond the Tiber; and

More near from out the Caesars' palace came

The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,

Of distant sentinels the fitful song

Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appeared to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot — where the Caesars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through levell'd battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth; —
But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!
While Caesar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay. —
And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which soften'd down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,
As 'twere, anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old! —
The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns. —

'Twas such a night!
'Tis strange that I recall it at this time;
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight

Even at the moment when they should array
Themselves in pensive order.

Enter the ABBOT.

ABBOT. My good Lord!

I crave a second grace for this approach;
But yet let not my humble zeal offend
By its abruptness — all it hath of ill
Recoils on me; its good in the effect
May light upon your head — could I say *heart* —
Could I touch *that*, with words or prayers, I should
Recall a noble spirit which hath wandered;
But is not yet all lost.

MAN. Thou know'st me not;
My days are numbered, and my deeds recorded:
Retire, or 'twill be dangerous — Away!

ABBOT. Thou dost not mean to menace me?

MAN. Not I;
I simply tell thee peril is at hand,
And would preserve thee.

ABBOT. What dost mean?

MAN. Look there!
What dost thou see?

ABBOT. Nothing.

MAN. Look there, I say,
And steadfastly; — now tell me what thou seest?

ABBOT. That which should shake me, — but
I fear it not —

I see a dusk and awful figure rise,
Like an infernal god, from out the earth;
His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds; he stands between
Thyself and me — but I do fear him not.

MAN. Thou hast no cause — he shall not harm
thee — but
His sight may shock thine old limbs into palsy.
I say to thee — Retire!

ABBOT. And I reply —
Never — till I have battled with this fiend —
What doth he here?

MAN. Why — ay — what doth he here?
I did not send for him, — he is unbidden.

ABBOT. Alas! lost mortal! what with guests
like these
Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake;
Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?
Ah! he unveils his aspect; on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of hell —
Avaunt! —

MAN. Pronounce — what is thy mission?

SPIRIT. Come!

ABBOT. What art thou, unknown being? answer! — speak!

SPIRIT. The genius of this mortal. — Come! 'tis time.

MAN. I am prepared for all things, but deny
The power which summons me. Who sent thee here?

SPIRIT. Thou'lt know anon — Come! come!

MAN. I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine,
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!

SPIRIT. Mortal! thine hour is come — Away!
I say.

MAN. I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee:
Away! I'll die as I have lived — alone.

SPIRIT. Then I must summon up my brethren. —
Rise! [Other Spirits rise up.

ABBOT. Avaunt! ye evil ones! Avaunt! I say, —
Ye have no power where piety hath power,
And I do charge ye in the name —

SPIRIT. Old man!
We know ourselves, our mission, and thine order;
Waste not thy holy words on idle uses,
It were in vain, this man is forfeited.

Once more I summon him — Away! away!

MAN. I do defy ye, — though I feel my soul
Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;

Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye — earthly strength
To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
Shall be ta'en limb by limb.

SPIRIT.

Reluctant mortal!

Is this the Magian who would so pervade
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal? — Can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life? the very life
Which made thee wretched!

MAN.

Thou false fiend, thou liest!

My life is in its last hour, — *that* I know,
Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
I do not combat against death, but thee
And thy surrounding angels; my past power
Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
But by superior science — penance — daring —
And length of watching — strength of mind — and skill
In knowledge of our fathers — when the earth
Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
And gave ye no supremacy: I stand
Upon my strength — I do defy — deny —
Spurn back, and scorn ye! —

SPIRIT.

But thy many crimes

Have made thee —

MAN. What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,
And greater criminals? — Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts —
Is its own origin of ill and end —
And its own place and time — its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without;
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not
 tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey —
But was my own destroyer; and will be
My own hereafter. — Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of death is on me — but not yours!
 [*The Demons disappear.*]

ABBOT. Alas! how pale thou art — thy lips are
 white —
And thy breast heaves — and in thy gasping throat

The accents rattle — Give thy prayers to heaven —
Pray — albeit but in thought, — but die not thus.

MAN. 'Tis over — my dull eyes can fix thee not;
But all things swim around me, and the earth
Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well —
Give me thy hand!

ABBOT. Cold — cold — even to the heart —
But yet one prayer — alas! how fares it with
thee? —

MAN. Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die.

[MANFRED expires.]

ABBOT. He's gone — his soul hath ta'en its
earthless flight —

Whither? I dread to think — but he is gone.

N O T E S.

Note 1, page 83, line 1.

——*the sunbow's rays still arch*

The torrent with the many hues of heaven.

This iris is formed by the rays of the sun over the lower part of the Alpine torrents: it is exactly like a rainy bow, come down to pay a visit, and so close that you may walk into it: — this effects lasts till noon.

Note 2, page 87, line 7.

*He who from out their fountain dwellings raised
Eros and Anteros, at Gadara.*

The philosopher Iamblicus. The story of the raising of Eros and Anteros may be found in his life, by Eunapius. It is well told.

Note 3, page 91, line 16.

——*she replied*

In words of dubious import, but fulfill'd.

The story of Pausanias, king of Sparta, (who commanded the Greeks at the battle of Platea, and afterwards perished

for an attempt to betray the Lacedemonians) and Cleonice is told in Plutarch's life of Cimon; and in the Laconics of Pausanias the Sophist, in his description of Greece.

Note 4, page 113, line 16.

—— *the giant sons*
Of the embrace of angels.

"That the *Sons of God* saw the daughters of men, that they were fair etc."

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the *Sons of God* came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown,"

Genesis, ch. vi. verses 2 and 4.

THE
LAMENT OF TASSO.

At Ferrara (in the library) are preserved the original MSS. of Tasso's *Gierusalemme* and of Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, with letters of Tasso, one from Titian to Ariosto; and the inkstand and chair, the tomb and the house of the latter. But as misfortune has a greater interest for posterity, and little or none for the cotemporary, the cell where Tasso was confined in the hospital of St. Anna attracts a more fixed attention than the residence or the monument of Ariosto — at least it had this effect on me. There are two inscriptions, one on the outer gate, the second over the cell itself, inviting, unnecessarily, the wonder and the indignation of the spectator. Ferrara is much decayed, and depopulated; the castle still exists entire; and I saw the court where Parisina and Hugo were beheaded, according to the annal of Gibbon.

THE
LAMENT OF TASSO.

I.

LONG years! — It tries the thrilling frame to bear
And eagle-spirit of a Child of Song —
Long years of outrage, calumny, and wrong;
Imputed madness, prisoned solitude,
And the mind's canker in its savage mood,
When the impatient thirst of light and air
Parches the heart; and the abhorred grate,
Marring the sunbeams with its hideous shade,
Works through the throbbing eyeball to the brain
With a hot sense of heaviness and pain;
And bare, at once, Captivity displayed
Stands scoffing through the never-opened gate,
Which nothing through its bars admits, save day
And tasteless food, which I have eat alone
Till its unsocial bitterness is gone;

And I can banquet like a beast of prey,
Sullen and lonely, couching in the cave
Which is my lair, and — it may be — my grave.
All this hath somewhat worn me, and may wear,
But must be borne. I stoop not to despair;
For I have battled with mine agony,
And made me wings wherewith to overfly
The narrow circus of my dungeon wall,
And freed the Holy Sepulchre from thrall;
And revelled among men and things divine,
And poured my spirit over Palestine,
In honour of the sacred war for him,
The God who was on earth and is in heaven,
For he hath strengthened me in heart and limb.
That through this sufferance I might be forgiven,
I have employed my penance to record
How Salem's shrine was won, and how adored.

II.

But this is o'er — my pleasant task is done: —
My long-sustaining friend of many years!
If I do blot thy final page with tears,
Know, that my sorrows have wrung from me none.
But thou, my young creation! my soul's child!
Which ever playing round me came and smiled,
And wooed me from myself with thy sweet sight,

Thou too art gone — and so is my delight:
And therefore do I weep and inly bleed
With this last bruise upon a broken reed.
Thou too art ended — what is left me now?
For I have anguish yet to bear — and how?
I know not that — but in the innate force
Of my own spirit shall be found resource.
I have not sunk, for I had no remorse,
Nor cause for such: they called me mad — and why?
Oh Leonora! wilt not *thou* reply?
I was indeed delirious in my heart
To lift my love so lofty as thou art;
But still my frenzy was not of the mind;
I knew my fault, and feel my punishment
Not less because I suffer it unbent.
That thou wert beautiful, and I not blind,
Hath been the sin which shuts me from mankind;
But let them go, or torture as they will,
My heart can multiply thine image still;
Successful love may sate itself away,
The wretched are the faithful; 'tis their fate
To have all feeling save the one decay,
And every passion into one dilate;
As rapid rivers into ocean pour;
But ours is fathomless, and hath no shore.

III.

Above me, hark! the long and maniac cry
Of minds and bodies in captivity.
And hark! the lash and the increasing howl,
And the half-inarticulate blasphemy!
There be some here with worse than frenzy foul,
Some who do still goad on the o'er-laboured mind,
And dim the little light that's left behind
With needless torture, as their tyrant will
Is wound up to the lust of doing ill:
With these and with their victims am I classed,
'Mid sounds and sights like these long years
 have passed;
'Mid sights and sounds like these my life may
 close;
So let it be — for then I shall repose.

IV.

I have been patient, let me be so yet;
I had forgotten half I would forget,
But it revives — oh! would it were my lot
To be forgetful as I am forgot! —
Feel I not wroth with those who bade me dwell
In this vast lazar-house of many woes?
Where laughter is not mirth, nor thought the mind,
Nor words a language, nor ev'n men mankind;

Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,
And each is tortured in his separate hell —
For we are crowded in our solitudes —
Many, but each divided by the wall,
Which echoes Madness in her babbling moods; —
While all can hear, none heed his neighbour's call —
None! save that One, the veriest wretch of all,
Who was not made to be the mate of these,
Nor bound between Distraction and Disease.
Feel I not wroth with those who placed me here?
Who have debased me in the minds of men,
Debarring me the usage of my own,
Blighting my life in best of its career,
Branding my thoughts as things to shun and fear?
Would I not pay them back those pangs again,
And teach them inward sorrow's stifled groan?
'The struggle to be calm, and cold distress,
Which undermines our Stoicall success?
No! — still too proud to be vindictive — I
Have pardoned princes' insults, and would die.
Yes, Sister of my Sovereign! for thy sake
I weep all bitterness from out my breast,
It hath no business where *thou* art a guest;
'Thy brother hates — but I can not detest;
Thou pitiest not — but I can not forsake.

V.

Look on a love which knows not to despair,
But all unquenched is still my better part,
Dwelling deep in my shut and silent heart
As dwells the gathered lightning in its cloud,
Encompassed with its dark and rolling shroud,
Till struck, — forth flies the all-etherial dart!
And thus at the collision of thy name
The vivid thought still flashes through my frame,
And for a moment all things as they were
Flit by me; — they are gone — I am the same.
And yet my love without ambition grew;
I knew thy state, my station, and I knew
A princess was no love-mate for a bard;
I told it not, I breathed it not, it was
Sufficient to itself, its own reward;
And if my eyes revealed it, they, alas!
Were punished by the silentness of thine,
And yet I did not venture to repine.
Thou wert to me a crystall-girded shrine,
Worshipped at holy distance, and around
Hallowed and meekly kissed the saintly ground;
Not for thou wert a princess, but that Love
Had robed thee with a glory, and arraved
Thy lineaments in beauty that dismayed —
Oh! not dismayed — but awed, like One above;

And in that sweet severity there was
A something which all softness did surpass —
I know not how — thy genius mastered mine —
My star stood still before thee: — if it were
Presumptuous thus to love without design,
That sad fatality hath cost me dear;
But thou art dearest still, and I should be
Fit for this cell, which wrongs me, but for *thee*.
The very love which locked me to my chain
Hath lightened half its weight; and for the rest,
Though heavy, lent me vigour to sustain,
And look to thee with undivided breast,
And foil the ingenuity of Pain.

VI.

It is no marvel — from my very birth
My soul was drunk with love, which did pervade
And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth;
Of objects all inanimate I made
Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers,
And rocks, whereby they grew, a paradise,
Where I did lay me down within the shade
Of waving trees, and dreamed uncounted hours,
Though I was chid for wandering; and the wise
Shook their white aged heads o'er me, and said
Of such materials wretched men were made,

And such a truant boy would end in woe,
And that the only lesson was a blow;
And then they smote me, and I did not weep,
But cursed them in my heart, and to my haunt
Returned and wept alone, and dreamed again
The visions which arise without a sleep.
And with my years my soul began to pant
With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain;
And the whole heart exhaled into One Want,
But undefined and wandering, till the day
I found the thing I sought — and that was thee;
And then I lost my being all to be
Absorbed in thine — the world was past away —
Thou didst annihilate the earth to me!

VII.

I loved all solitude — but little thought
To spend I know not what of life, remote
From all communion with existence, save
The maniac and his tyrant; had I been
Their fellow, many years ere this had seen
My mind like theirs corrupted to its grave,
But who hath seen me writhe, or heard me rave?
Perchance in such a cell we suffer more
Than the wrecked sailor on his desert shore;
The world is all before him — *mine* is *here*,

Scarce twice the space they must accord my bier.
What though *he* perish, he may lift his eye
And with a dying glance upbraid the sky —
I will not raise my own in such reproof,
Although 'tis clouded by my dungeon roof.

VIII.

Yet do I feel at times my mind decline,
But with a sense of its decay: — I see
Unwonted lights along my prison shine,
And a strange demon, who is vexing me
With pilfering pranks and petty pains, below
The feeling of the healthful and the free;
But much to One, who long hath suffered so,
Sickness of heart, and narrowness of place,
And all that may be borne, or can debase.
I thought mine enemies had been but man,
But spirits may be leagued with them — all Earth
Abandons — Heaven forgets me; — in the dearth
Of such defence the Powers of Evil can,
It may be, tempt me further, and prevail
Against the outworn creature they assail.
Why in this furnace is my spirit proved
Like steel in tempering fire? because I loved?
Because I loved what not to love, and see,
Was more or less than mortal, and than me.

IX.

I once was quick in feeling — that is o'er; —
My scars are callous, or I should have dashed
My brain against these bars as the sun flashed
In mockery through them; — if I bear and bore
The much I have recounted, and the more
Which hath no words, 'tis that I would not die
And sanction with self-slaughter the dull lie
Which snared me here, and with the brand of shame
Stamp madness deep into my memory,
And woo compassion to a blighted name,
Sealing the sentence which my foes proclaim.
No — it shall be immortal! — and I make
A future temple of my present cell,
Which nations yet shall visit for my sake.
While thou, Ferrara! when no longer dwell
The ducall chiefs within thee, shalt fall down,
And crumbling piecemeal view thy hearthless halls,
A poet's wreath shall be thine only crown,
A poet's dungeon thy most far renown,
While strangers wonder o'er thy unpeopled walls!
And thou! Léonora! thou — who wert ashamed
That such as I could love — who blushed to hear
To less than monarchs that thou couldst be dear,
Go! tell thy brother that my heart, untamed
By grief, years, weariness — and it may be

A taint of that he would impute to me —
From long infection of a den like this,
Where the mind rots congenial with the abyss,
Adores thee still; — and add — that when the
towers

And battlements which guard his joyous hours
Of banquet, dance, and revel, are forgot,
Or left untended in a dull repose,
This — this shall be a consecrated spot!
But Thou — when all that Birth and Beauty
throws

Of magic round thee is extinct — shalt have
One half the laurel which o'ershades my grave.
No power in death can tear our names apart,
As none in life could rend thee from my heart.
Yes, Leonora! it shall be our fate
To be entwined for ever — but too late!

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The works of the right honourable Lord Byron

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